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PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999

Interim study of the question of honoraria payable to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations

Eighth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the Secretary-General's report on the question of honoraria payable to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations (A/52/699). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its resolution 35/218 of 17 December 1980, the General Assembly decided to set up the rates applicable for the payment of honoraria, with effect from 1 January 1981, to members of the International Law Commission, the International Narcotics Control Board, the United Nations Administrative Tribunal and the Human Rights Committee, bodies which the General Assembly had earlier decided should receive honoraria on an exceptional basis. Those rates are reflected in paragraph 1 of the Secretary-General's report.

3. The Secretary-General indicates in paragraph 21 of his report that by its resolutions 36/240 A of 18 December 1981 the General Assembly had approved that the members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be paid the rate of honoraria set out in resolution 35/218; the Assembly had also decided, in its resolution 44/201 A of 21 December 1989, that the emoluments for members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child should be payable at the rates of honoraria set out in resolution 35/218. The Advisory Committee points out, in this connection, that General Assembly resolution 36/240 A does not contain explicit authorization for the payment of honoraria to the members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Committee sought clarification as to what constitutes the basis for the

payment of honoraria to the members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women but was not provided with it.

4. The Advisory Committee recalls that the basic principle enunciated by the General Assembly in its resolutions 2489 (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, 3536 (XXX) of 17 December 1975 and 35/218 was that neither a fee nor any other remuneration in addition to travel expenses and a subsistence allowance at the standard rate would normally be paid to members of organs or subsidiary organs unless expressly decided upon by the Assembly. With regard to the exceptions to this basic principle granted by the General Assembly, the Committee notes from paragraph 11 of the Secretary-General's report that "at the time of the creation of the various bodies, the Secretary-General had not been involved in developing those decisions nor had he been advised of the rationale for payment of honoraria".

5. The Advisory Committee further recalls that the General Assembly in its resolution 3536 (XXX) requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive study of the question of honoraria payable to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations, taking into account, inter alia, the following factors:

> "(a) The practice that may be applied to other organizations within the United Nations system;
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> (b) The need to secure the services of competent and independent experts;
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> (c) The implications of introducing uniformity into the conditions for the payment of honoraria to full-time members and part-time members of the organs and subsidiary organs concerned or likely to be concerned;
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> (d) The possible implications of discontinuing honoraria for part-time members with regard, inter alia, to retaining qualified experts in those organs."

6. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 23 of the report (A/52/699) that the Secretary-General intends to submit a comprehensive report on the matter to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. The Advisory Committee trusts that in responding to specific requirements set out in General Assembly resolution 3536 (XXX) with respect to the comprehensive study, the Secretary-General will also identify criteria and legislative authority for exceptions from the basic principle that neither a fee nor any other remuneration would normally be paid to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations in addition to travel expenses and a subsistence allowance.

7. Pending the undertaking of the comprehensive review, the Secretary-General, in his report (A/52/699), attempts "to respond to the concerns expressed by both the President and members of the International Narcotics Control Board and the President and members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal concerning the level of honoraria" (ibid., para. 23).

8. The revised rates of honoraria, which reflect a 25 per cent increase over the rates that came into effect as from 1 January 1981, are proposed by the Secretary-General to take effect as from 1 January 1998. The Advisory Committee is of the view, in this connection, that it will be more appropriate if the question of the rate of honoraria is considered in the context of the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on the issue to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.